

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 SS-15 SP-02 NSCE-00

ACDA-12 L-03 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 MCE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00

DODE-00 INRE-00 /061 W

-----090895 021901Z /43

P 021515Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5227

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 04107

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PCAT, BE, XT

SUBJECT: INFORMATION NEEDS ON WEST EUROPEAN CONVENTIONAL
ARMS TRANSFERS TO THE THIRD WORLD

REFS: A) STATE 45364,

B) INR/PMT - SARRIS/NAVEZ LETTER, DATED 2/16/78

1. FOLLOWING ARE OUR PRELIMINARY REPLIES KEYED TO
NUMBERED PARAS IN 77 STATE 257011 RECEIVED UNDER COVER
OF REF B:

- PARA 2A. TOTAL ANNUAL BELGIAN ARMS AND MUNITIONS
SALES AMOUNT TO APPROX 1 OF TOTAL BELGIAN EXPORTS,
OR ABOUT \$350 MILLION PER YEAR. BELGIUM COUNTS 30-35
FOREIGN CLIENTS FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, PRIMARILY
IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA. THE
BELGIAN GOVERNMENT PROVIDES EMUORT GUARANTEES. THE
ACTUAL VOLUME OF SUCH SALES BY COUNTRY AND TYPE OF
MATERIEL ARE TREATED BY THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AS
HIGHLY CLASSIFIED, AS ARE THE FIGURES CITED ABOVE.
THEY HAVE BEEN PROVIDED TO US BY A KNOWLEDGEABLE
GOVERNMENT SOURCE FOR OUR OWN INFORMATION AND MUST
NOT BE CITED IN ANY DOCUMENT LIABLE TO DECLASSIFICATION.
IT IS WIDELY KNOWN WHAT BELGIUM PRODUCES IN THE WAY

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OF RELATIVELY UNSOPHISTICATED ARMS/MUNITIONS IN GENERAL
TERMS: SMALL ARMS, MUNITIONS FOR SMALL ARMS RANGING
UP THROUGH 155MM ARTILLERY SHELLS, INFANTRY WEAPONS
(E.G. GRENADE AND ROCKET LAUNCHERS), THE EPERVIER
REMOTELY GUIDED RECONNAISSANCE DRONE, PARTS FOR AIRCRAFT
(F-16 AND OTHERS), VEHICLES, AND ELECTRONIC/COMMUNICATIONS
EQUIPMENT.

- PARA 2B. BASIC AND MOST CURRENT BELGIAN POLICY ON ARMS EXPORTS WAS SUBJECT OF BRUSSELS A-15, 1/19/78. IT WILL BE SEEN THAT THIS POLICY LEAVES THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WITH SUFFICIENT LATITUDE TO DO PRETTY MUCH WHAT IT WISHES. PRIMARY FACTOR MOTIVATING BELGIAN ARMS SALES POLICY AT THE MOMENT IS THE NEED TO MAINTAIN JOBS IN A PERIOD OF SEVERE ECONOMIC RECESSION. A LONGER EXPLANATION OF BELGIAN SALES AND REEXPORT TO THIRD PARTIES POLICIES WAS PROVIDED IN BRUSSELS 1911 (EXDIS). NO RECENT CHANGE IN BELGIAN THINKING OR POLICY IN THIS REGARD HAS OCCURRED. ARMS TRANSFERS ARE PROBABLY IN MOST CASES, THE RESULT OF DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN PURCHASERS AND PRIVATE PRODUCERS. THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT MUST BY LAW APPROVE EXPORTS RESULTING FROM SALES CONTRACTS.

- PARA 2C. THE INTERFACE BETWEEN PRIVATE ARMS PRODUCERS AND THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS CLOSE, THOUGH DIFFICULT TO PIN DOWN. THIS IS TRUE OF BELGIAN INDUSTRY, LABOR AND THE GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL. UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT HAS A CLEAR REASON TO OBJECT TO A SALE ON POLITICAL GROUNDS (E.G. THE EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA), INDUSTRY CAN COUNT ON GOVERNMENT (AND LABOR) SUPPORT FOR A SALE. PUBLIC OPINION IS LARGELY UNMOVED BY SUCH SALES DESPITE SOME RUMBLING ON THE LEFTWING. BELGIUM
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IS NOT A PRODUCER OF MAJOR ITEMS (E.G. PLANES, SHIPS, MISSILES, ARMORED EQUIPMENT) WITH MINOR EXCEPTIONS (E.G. LOCAL SHIPYARDS, AND METAL WORKING FACILITIES HAVE PRODUCED FRIGATES AND ARMORED CARS). THEREFORE, BELGIUM WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF PURCHASERS FOR SUCH MAJOR ITEMS WERE THE USG TO DENY THEM ACCESS TO U.S. PRODUCERS. BELGIUM COULD REPLACE THE U.S. AS THE SUPPLIER OF PARTS FOR MANY MAJOR ITEMS AS WELL AS FOR THE CATEGORIES OF ITEMS LISTED UNDER "PARA 2A" ABOVE. NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN BELGIAN PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES IN THIS AREA ARE IN PROSPECT. THE EXISTING PRODUCTION CAPABILITY CLEARLY IS EXPORT ORIENTED AND FAR OUTDISTANCES BELGIUM'S OWN DEFENSE NEEDS.

2. FOLLOWING IS OUR PRELIMINARY REPLY TO 77 STATE 305504, RECEIVED UNDER COVER OF REF B:

BROAD BRUSH EMBASSY VIEW OF BELGIAN ARMS TRANSFER PRACTICES AND POLICIES WAS PROVIDED IN PRECEDING PARAGRAPH. BELGIAN POLITICAL RECEPTIVITY TO ANY INITIATIVE AIMED AT CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS WOULD BE CONDITIONED BY EXTENT TO WHICH BELGIANS PERCEIVED SUCH AN

INITIATIVE AS MEANS TO POSSIBLY EFFECTIVE ACTION. THEY ARE NOT ABOUT TO EXERCISE SELF RESTRAINT IF THERE IS ANY CHANCE THAT THEY WILL LOSE AN EXISTING MARKET TO ANY OTHER SUPPLIER. THEY WOULD ALSO CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE WISHES OF PURCHASERS IN ORDER NOT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT BELGIUM, AS A DEVELOPED COUNTRY, KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR THE THIRD WORLD. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO A LIMITED, REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT INITIATIVE, INVOLVING ALL SUPPLIERS AND ALL POTENTIAL CLIENTS IN THE REGION, RATHER THAN A MORE

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DODE-00 INRE-00 /066 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5228

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GENERAL APPROACH. THE BELGIANS WOULD PROBABLY REACT MOST FAVORABLY TO AN INITIATIVE LIMITED TO CERTAIN CATEGORY OF EXPENSIVE, SOPHISTICATED ARMS - THE MORESO AS THEY ARE LESS APT TO PRODUCE THESE. PRIOR TO CONSIDERING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SUPPLIERS AND RECIPIENTS, THE BELGIANS WOULD BE MOST APT TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO A DISCUSSION OF THE PROSPECTS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE ON A BILATERAL BASIS OR IN A DISCUSSION WITHIN NATO. THE BELGIANS ARE NOT APT TO FAVOR MOVING TO AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IF THEY BELIEVE THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE FOR SUCCESS.

3. WE WILL USE BOTH STATE TELEGRAMS CITED ABOVE AS A FRAMEWORK TO TRY TO DEVELOP MORE STATISTICAL AND SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON BELGIAN ARMS POLICIES AND PRACTICES. AS THESE SUBJECTS ARE SENSITIVE FOR THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AND GET DEEPLY INTO AREAS WHERE INFORMATION IS NOT SHARED WITH THE USG, RESULTS PROBABLY WILL NOT BE QUICK, EASY OR SIGNIFICANT. CHAMBERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMMUNITION, ARMS SHIPMENTS, ARMS CONTROL INSPECTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRUSSE04107
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780096-0182
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803116/aaaadupt.tel
Line Count: 168
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 45364
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3145944
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INFORMATION NEEDS ON WEST EUROPEAN CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS TO THE THIRD WORLD
TAGS: MASS, PCAT, BE, XT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/36ea3dba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014